BELMONT MILL, OFF-LOADING RAMP AND CHUTE
(Nevada Belmont Mill)
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest Service Road No. 623
Ely vicinity
White Pine County
Nevada

HAER NV-46-D
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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Location: Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest Service Road No. 623, Ely vicinity, White Pine County, Nevada.
U.S. Geological Survey, Seligman Canyon, Nevada, 7.5 Quadrangle (1992), Township 16 North, Range 57 East, Section 1.
UTM Zone 11, Easting 2060736.29, Northing 14266962.30 (southeast corner of structure) (NAD 83).
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Feature No. F17.

Significance: The Tonopah Belmont Development Company (TBDC) was one of the most important companies created during Nevada's early twentieth-century mining boom. As ore deposits in its central Nevada mines were depleted, the company sought new claims to resurrect its fortunes. In 1926 TBDC built the Belmont Mill near Hamilton to process lead and silver ore from its recently acquired claims in the White Pine mining district of eastern Nevada. The small pilot mill employed the most recent advances in table concentration and flotation mineral processing techniques, and the company erected numerous other buildings and structures to support the mining and milling work. The site was largely abandoned by TBDC after a few years, but later owners used the mill and associated structures for smaller operations. The off-loading ramp and chute probably date to this period and facilitated the delivery of unprocessed ore or other material to the upper levels of the mill. Today, although most of the equipment has been removed, the Belmont Mill site is one of the only intact early twentieth-century mill complexes in eastern Nevada. As such, it is a tangible reminder of the decline and failure of a once-powerful company and, thereby, of the boom and bust cycle so common in the mining industry. The subsequent modification and reuse of the mill for small-scale operations typifies the ceaseless hum of optimism that sustains the mining industry.

Description: The off-loading ramp and chute are located about 36' west of the mill (HAER No. NV-46-A), at an elevation corresponding to mill levels 3 and 2. The ramp is approached by the access road in the small drainage just north of the mill. The road doubles back about 200' west of the mill and then heads east, forking after about 60'. The north fork marks the beginning of the ramp, which is about 100' long; the south fork continues to the mill. The ramp comprises a raised mound of soil and gravel for much of its length, with a double-track dirt road for vehicles. At the east end of the ramp, massive timber decking is laid from east to west over joists laid north to south; this system provided reinforcement and stability for vehicles delivering heavy loads of ore. The eastern end of the ramp terminates in timber cribbing about 12' high and 30' wide; the horizontal shoring members of the cribbing are about 11-1/2" high by 4" to 6" thick, held in place with vertical 6" x 6" posts. A truck would have dumped its load into a steel ore chute at the top of the cribbing; this chute remains but has fallen to the ground.

According to oral accounts, the chute fed a jaw crusher (no longer extant) at the base of the cribbing.[1] The crushed ore may then have been transported to Level 1 or Level 2 of the mill, either across the nearby trestle that spanned from the hillside to Level 1 of the mill, or by a more direct system that no longer remains in place.

History: See the Narrative Overview in HAER No. UT-46 for a broad contextual history.

The history of the off loading ramp and chute is unclear. It is not visible in a ca. 1940 photograph of the mill (see Figure 5 in HAER No. NV-46) and probably dates to the 1940s or 1950s when the mill was reconfigured for smaller operations. The need for a ramp and chute may indicate that the aerial tramway was either not functional or too difficult to operate with so few people and for such a small scale of operation. Ore could have been trucked from the mine to the top of the ramp, where it was crushed and then fed into the mill for concentration. Alternatively, or additionally, the ramp could have served as the drop-off point for the processing (or reprocessing) of ore or tailings taken from other mines.

Sources: See HAER No. NV-46.

Historian: Anne Oliver, Principal, Oliver Conservation Group. Fieldwork for the project was conducted in the fall of 2010. Project documentation was accepted by HABS/HAER in 2011.

Project Information: See HAER No. NV-46 for complete details. In summary, this project was completed under a contract between the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and a consulting team under the direction of ajc architects (Salt Lake City, Utah), in consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. The project historian was Anne Oliver, historic preservation consultant with Oliver Conservation Group. Matt Wallace, intern architect with ajc architects, was responsible for the architectural measured drawings and completed all fieldwork and final drawings with the assistance of Oliver Smith Callis, draftsman. The photography was produced by Steve Tregeagle Photography under the direction of Steve Tregeagle and with the assistance of Heath Brown.

[1] Interview with Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., 1 October 2010.